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September 10, 2004

TO: JLARC Members

FROM: Cindi Yates, Legislative Auditor
            Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee

            Bob Fitchitt, Administrator
            Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program Committee (LEAP)

Regarding: **SIEC Update on Statewide Public Safety Communications Inventories and Plans**

SHB 1271 from the 2003 Session sets up a strategic interoperability telecommunications executive committee responsible for completing an inventory and a state plan for achieving interoperability of emergency communications. JLARC and the Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program (LEAP) are to provide consultation for these efforts.

Earlier this year JLARC and LEAP staff received the Interim Statewide Public Safety Communications Plan issued through the State Interoperability Executive Committee. Upon reviewing the interim plan, we shared with the SIEC two areas that we believe warrant further elaboration.

1. **Recommendations.** The interim plan lays out five policy recommendations, as well as four legislative recommendations. However, the current version of the plan is not clear about how either set of these recommendations will be pursued or implemented. We believe it will be helpful, in terms of legislative oversight, to have a progress report indicating what options are being considered on how these recommendations might be implemented in the near term.

2. **Involvement of Local Governments.** Both the interim inventory of public safety communications systems and the interim plan do not give much emphasis to those systems operated by local governments in Washington. We believe that the goal of seamless interoperability will necessarily involve these local governments at the core of future efforts. We assume that the final inventory, as well as the final plan, will have much more of a focus on these local systems and their roles in a statewide system.

Attached is an SIEC Executive Summary highlighting the SIEC's work to date, progress toward implementing the recommendations contained in their interim communications plan, and future activities. At JLARC's September 22nd meeting, SIEC Chair Chief Lowell Porter and Vice-chair Chief James Broman will brief JLARC on the work of the Statewide Interoperability Committee.

Attachment

SIEC Executive Summary

SIEC Members

Chief Lowell Porter-Chair
Washington State Patrol

Chief James Broman-Vice Chair
Washington State Fire Chiefs Association

John Conrad
Washington State Department of Transportation

Mike Doherty
Washington State Association of Counties

Tom Griffith
Washington State Emergency Management Association

Sheriff Ken Irwin
Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs

Mark Kahley
Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Alan Komenski
Association of Washington Cities

General Timothy Lowenberg
Washington State Military Department

Michael McVicker
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Jim Mullen
Washington State Emergency Management Division

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On April 16, 2003, Governor Gary Locke signed Substitute House Bill 1271 into law, which established a State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC). This legislation was codified into RCW 43.105.330. The SIEC is responsible for ensuring interoperability of radio communications equipment and licensed spectrum through proper investment and management standards.

Major responsibilities:

- Develop policies for technical standards for state wireless radio communications systems

- Coordinate/manage the licensing and use of state-designed and -licensed radio frequencies

- Serve as point of contact for the state and Federal Communications Commission regarding allocations, use and licensing of radio spectrum

- Seek support for state-sponsored wireless communications systems

- Develop recommendations for legislation that may be required to promote interoperability of state wireless communications systems

- Foster cooperation and coordination among public safety and emergency response organizations

- Work with wireless communications groups and associations to ensure interoperability

The legislation required the SIEC to produce and provide four key deliverables to the Legislature:

- Conduct an inventory of state government-operated public safety communications systems by December 31, 2003

- Complete an interim statewide public safety communications plan by March 31, 2004

- Conduct an inventory of all public safety communications systems in the state, to include local governments by July 31, 2004

- Complete a final statewide public safety communications plan by December 31, 2004

To date, two of the four reports have been produced as outlined in the SIEC's enabling legislation, and a preliminary inventory report. The first report, the "Inventory of State Government-Operated Communications Systems," provides information gathered from the completed inventory of state government-operated public safety communications

Accomplishments

Completed the following reports:

1. Inventory of State Government-Operated Communications Systems

2. Interim Statewide Public Safety Communications Systems Plan

3. Inventory of Statewide Public Safety Communications Systems Phase 1 Report

Joined the Spectrum Coalition to obtain additional spectrum in the 700 MHz band.

Approved plan on how to use 700 MHz spectrum designated for interoperable communications and state spectrum use.

Created the SIEC Web site. http://siec.wa.gov

Awarded grant to hire contractor to work on the inventory and final communications plan. Federal Engineering hired to help complete these two plans.

Coordinated with Emergency Management Division to complete the portion of the State Homeland Security Strategic Plan that pertains to interoperable communications.

systems. The document highlights information contained within the inventory and provides a brief summary of important conclusions drawn from this data.

The second report, the "Interim Statewide Public Safety Communications Systems Plan," takes into account information gathered from the inventory of state government-operated communications systems presented to the Legislature in December 2003, and many public sector communications professionals throughout the state who have assembled to address interoperability issues.

Specifically, the plan focuses on how existing resources can be used in a more coordinated, collaborative fashion:

- Use intra-disciplinary command and control channels more effectively to enable communication between different jurisdictions.

- Identify and/or fund caches of radios to be located throughout the state and plan for rapidly deploying these assets to provide instantaneous interoperability at the scene of a major incident.

- Establish plans that will deploy interoperability gateway devices that can be used in emergencies as required by state and local government.

- Adopt the National Incident Management System (NIMS) by all state agencies for incident command and control.

The "Inventory of Statewide Public Safety Communications Systems Phase 1 Report," is a preliminary report of data collected from a limited sample of local governments within Washington state. The data was extracted from a recently completed survey of local government-operated public safety communications systems. Surveyed entities represent two percent[1] of the more than 1,400 entities within the state's public safety and emergency response communities. The survey also represents approximately 55 percent[2] of the state's population in nine counties throughout the state.

Due to the year-end deadline, the large number of public safety organizations involved, the challenges of reaching the right people and the requirements to gather comparable data, the SIEC has hired a contractor to survey state and local government agencies that were not included in the Phase 1 Report. In addition, because the survey tool is more comprehensive and to standardize data, the SIEC will resurvey those agencies included in the current inventories. The SIEC applied for and received a grant to fund the hiring of Federal Engineering, Inc., which was selected through a competitive acquisition process. This inventory will be delivered to the Legislature upon completion.

The next step for the SIEC is to complete a final statewide public safety communications plan and submit it to the Legislature by December 31, 2004. Federal Engineering, Inc. will also work with the SIEC to expedite the completion of this plan.

9/2/2004

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[1] Percentage is based upon information provided to the SIEC by representatives of public safety and initial responder organizations and agencies.

[2] Based upon data taken from the Office of Financial Management Web site.

State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC)
Focusing on Emergency Communications System Interoperability

SIEC Members

Chief Lowell Porter-Chair
Washington State Patrol

Chief James Broman-Vice Chair
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Background

The tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, served as a catalyst for public safety agencies across the nation to examine how they communicate with each other in times of disaster. Public safety agencies find that such coordination is essential for disaster preparedness, emergency management and public safety. Coordination results in more cost-effective use of state resources and improves government services to those who work, play and live within Washington state.

To address emergency communications system interoperability in Washington state, Gov. Gary Locke signed House Bill 1271 into law on April 16, 2003, which created the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC). This legislation was codified into RCW 43.105.330. The SIEC is responsible for managing how Washington state public safety agencies use wireless communications to carry out their daily operations and coordinate responses during major events.

Challenge

Public safety officers, firefighters and emergency medical service providers are severely hampered in their ability to effectively respond in a coordinated manner to crimes, disasters, fires and medical emergencies because their communications systems are often incompatible.

An article in the April 2000 edition of the *National Institute of Justice Journal* stated: "Public safety agencies report that incompatible radio frequency [equipment] … and limited funding to update equipment are their biggest problems."

Facts:

- One in three public safety agencies have experienced operational difficulties due to lack of wireless interoperability.

- Jurisdictions have invested in different, incompatible wireless technologies.

- Public safety communication is spread over ten bands of spectrum.

- Washington's diverse geography presents logistical problems.

Accomplishments

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Coordinated with Emergency Management Division to complete the portion of the State Homeland Security Strategic Plan that pertains to interoperable communications.

This results in:

- increased risk to life and property due to unavailability of safety/medical personnel (unable to receive coordinated emergency instructions; staff occupied with duplicative training); and

- increased costs (emergency vehicles requiring multiple radios, additional training, no leverage for aggregated purchasing discounts) due to the lack of a coordinated approach.

Call to action

The actions currently taking place:

- Seek partnerships between state and local agencies

- Develop a wireless communications plan for Washington state

- Identify funding resources

- Establish emergency technology standards

- Make coordinated investments in statewide systems

Approach

Interoperability is an essential communication link with public safety and public service communications systems, which permits units from two or more different entities to interact with one another. It also allows the exchange of information according to a prescribed method to achieve predictable results.

The SIEC was created and codified in July 2003 in part to:

- Develop policies for technical standards for state wireless radio communications systems

- Coordinate and manage the licensing and use of state-designed and state-licensed radio frequencies

- Serve as point of contact for the state and Federal Communications Commission on matters relating to allocations, use and licensing of radio spectrum

- Seek support, including possible federal funding or other funding, for state-sponsored wireless communications systems

- Develop recommendations for legislation that may be required to promote interoperability of state wireless communications systems

- Foster cooperation and coordination among public safety and emergency response organizations

- Work with wireless communications groups and associations to ensure interoperability among all public safety emergency response wireless communications systems

Federal Engineering, Inc.

Deliverables

Through a competitive acquisition process, the State Interoperability Executive Committee hired Federal Engineering, Inc. to complete the inventory of statewide public safety communications systems and the final statewide public safety communications plan.

Federal Engineering's deliverables

Phase 1

- Develop local government inventory survey instrument
- Conduct forums with each of the nine Washington state homeland security regions
- Make online survey instrument available to state and local participants
- Compile data and publish results of survey

Phase 2

- Develop final systems capabilities and user needs document
- Assist SIEC with development of "Alternative Solutions" request for information
- Develop final alterative report
- Develop system architecture report
- Deliver final Technical Implementation Plan

About FE

Federal Engineering, Inc. (FE) is an independent, nationwide systems engineering and consulting firm specializing in the planning, design and implementation of state-of-the-art public safety communications systems for state and local governments. FE's corporate headquarters in Northern Virginia are strategically located in the communications capitol of the United States. This location allows FE to leverage a wealth of library materials, automated design tools and partner with the Federal Communications Commission, the Department of Homeland Security and other key federal government agencies.

Founded in 1983, FE specifically provides public safety communications systems needs assessments, analyses, design, procurement support, implementation management and program management.